

Californians say "baby, baby, no more drilling"

By Clare Baldwin

[Reuters:](#) U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar confronted a host of sea creatures and polar bears on Thursday as costumed Californians told the new administration 'no' to offshore oil drilling.

Salazar did not hint at the contents of President [Barack Obama](#) 's energy policy, but said it would address climate change and include oil and gas.

"We're not going to turn off the oil and gas requirements we have for this country overnight or even in a decade. We're going to see oil and gas production," he told a packed hearing on offshore drilling.

The crowd booed a lonely supporter of offshore drilling and waved dollar bills to signify that they thought increased production of oil and gas was a sell-out of environmental policy.

Californians, known for their cars as well as their love of the outdoors, on the whole have been less united.

Last summer, when gasoline prices surged above \$4 a gallon and chants of "drill, baby, drill" became a rallying cry at the Republican National Convention, a majority of Californians supported offshore drilling for the first time.

The July poll by the Public Policy Institute of California found 51 percent of Californians favored expanding offshore drilling, up 10 points from a year earlier.

But the poll also found that 52 percent of Californians believe global warming is a serious threat

to their state.

Last week the Board of Supervisors of California's Santa Barbara County, the site of a 1969 oil spill that galvanized the modern environmental movement, voted to reverse a decision backing offshore energy development.

SHAPING NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

When Salazar took office in January he was handed a five-year plan drafted in the final days of the Bush administration to open parts of the Atlantic, Gulf Coast, Pacific, and Alaska to outer continental shelf drilling between 2010 and 2015.

The outer continental shelf is 1.75 billion acres of federally administered sea floor, the equivalent of 80 percent of the United States landmass. As of 2006, the shelf was believed to have about 87 billion barrels of recoverable oil and 420 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

At current prices of about \$50 a barrel, only about 50 percent of the remaining reserves are economically recoverable, according to a federal report.

"Our national policy has been hijacked by 'drill, baby, drill,'" California Congresswoman Jackie Speier told the audience. "The new rallying cry is 'baby, baby, no more drilling.'"

California Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi told reporters funds should be spent on clean energy such as solar thermal, wind and geothermal. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger targets 33 percent of electricity from renewables by 2020.

"We're on the very early stages of a new industrial revolution, a new industrial revolution not based on fossil fuels but, rather, based on renewable energy," Garamendi said.

But the country will not be able to avoid oil, chief economist of the American Petroleum Institute John Felmy said in an interview with Reuters prior to the hearing.

"We need energy efficiency, we need alternatives, but we also need oil and gas," he said, noting that oil provides power for 96 percent of all transportation.

"Hopefully we will see a fleet of electric cars come in place, but until they do, there's no way," he said.

No drilling policy is expected until after the comment period ends on September 21, but Salazar said an energy policy should be made public by the end of 2009.

(Additional reporting by Braden Reddall in San Francisco)